

Adding To Your Faith

by Anton Bosch

This sermon focuses on the importance of diligently adding virtues to our faith to grow in godliness and partake in the divine nature. It emphasizes the balance between God's work and our responsibility in spiritual growth, highlighting the need for practical application of knowledge and goodness in our daily lives. The speaker addresses misconceptions about faith and the necessity of actively seeking God and His Word for true knowledge and transformation.

Scripture: 2 Peter 1:5, John 3:16, Proverbs 2:3, James 1:22, Philippians 2:12, Colossians 3:2, 2 Timothy 2:15, Galatians 5:22, Psalm 119:105, Ephesians 4:22

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Active Faith"

Description

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Transcript

I apologize to the internet people. We did have a technical problem and that's why things have been delayed. We're in the second epistle to Peter, 2 Peter and chapter 1. And I'm just going to read verses 5 through 11 to save some time.

So 1 Peter, 2 Peter, sorry, chapter 1, verse 5 through 11. But also for this very reason, in all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

For he who lacks these things is short-sighted even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his own old sins. Therefore brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never stumble.

For so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. So let's just go back to verse 4 where we ended up last week and pick up the thread. And

obviously this is the end of another thread, so we're not going to go right back to the very beginning.

But he says, by which has been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. Now in verse 5 where we're going, he says, but also for this very reason. In other words, in the light of what he has just said.

So what has he said? He said that he has given us exceedingly great and precious promises, that we may be partakers of the divine nature. Because he has given us the promises, we need to be giving all diligence. Because he has made everything available to us.

So here's the balance that we must also always maintain. And that is that there is the part that God does and there is the part that we do. In some forms of doctrine, there is nothing that we do.

God saves us against our will. He keeps us against our will. Everything that happens, whether it's good or bad, God controls everything.

And we just go along for the ride. Now we don't believe that to be the truth. And you'll see, here's one example why that is not the truth.

But then there is the other side where it all depends on me or on you, on us. And we have to do everything. And we have to save ourselves and we have to keep ourselves saved.

And we need to get ourselves into heaven. And that also is not the truth. The truth is somewhere, not between the two, but a mixture of those two things.

So there is that part which God does and there is the part that we do. So God calls us. Whosoever believes in Him will not perish.

God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. So God does that part. He gives His Son.

He calls us. But we need to believe. We need to respond.

There's that part that we do. And so here is the same thing. In verse 4 He tells us what God does.

He has given us exceedingly great and precious promises that we might become partakers of the divine nature. So He has given us what we need to become like Him. But now He says, and you'll see that it's the same, but also there's that continuation, for this reason giving all diligence.

So here's the part that we have to do. This is not the part that God's going to do. And that's the problem, is that so many Christians today are in either of those two extremes.

And it seems that the pendulum is swinging towards this idea that there is nothing that I need to do. God's going to do everything. If I'm not growing, well, it's God's fault.

If I sin, it's God's fault. There's a literal doctrine that God is the author of evil, that God causes evil in our lives. And so it's not my fault.

The great author of that whole doctrine murdered a man. And he is one of these great theologians that everybody looked up to, and his justification was, God made me do it. God made me do it.

So I'm not guilty. God is guilty, but because God cannot be guilty, because God is right, there's no fault with God. I mean, what kind of doctrine is that? And, of course, then there's the other extreme where, well, the devil made me do it.

Now, God doesn't make us do anything, and the devil doesn't make us do anything. God makes everything available to us, sets everything before us. And if we make the right choices, then we end up doing the right things.

The problem is that we end up doing the wrong things because we make the wrong choices way at the beginning of that process. And so we find ourselves in these minor decisions all the time. Am I going to do this or that? I make the wrong decision.

I end up on the wrong road, and then God gives me another way out, another fork in the road, and again I make the wrong decision, and I end up very far from where I'm supposed to be. And then I say, well, how did I get here? Well, you got there because you made a series of wrong decisions. And that's called walking in the flesh.

If I'm walking in the Spirit, then I'm making the right decisions, and I'm ending up in the place where I ought to be. None of these major decisions that we make in our lives are out of the blue. Suddenly we make this major decision to kill somebody, to use the example that I used earlier on.

I've been speaking this year about the great falling away and about the great leaders, and we're seeing the Christian leaders fall one after the other. And just yesterday, one of the great apologists of the faith was exposed. He died a few months ago, but he has been exposed as being sexually compromised.

Let me just put it that way. But when you look at the series of decisions that he made in order to end up where he did, it's no wonder he ended up where he did. It wasn't that he woke up one day and decided to become sexually abusive.

It doesn't happen that way. It's a bunch of little decisions and little steps closer and closer and closer until you end up in a position where, in fact, it's not even a decision anymore because you've compromised yourself and you find yourself in a position where sin just happens, if you will. And so God is doing everything that's necessary for us to attain to His divine nature.

He's made everything available to us. He is giving us His Spirit. He gives us His Word.

He gives us the church. He gives us the preachers. He gives us everything that we need.

All we need to do is simply make the right choices and do the right things. Now, having said that by way of a long introduction, let me get to our text this evening. So, for this very reason, because everything is available through the promises that we might be able to become like Jesus, giving all diligence.

Giving all diligence. This is what we have to do. When it comes to diligence, let me look at the English Standard Version.

Oh, I got the wrong one. I had it on the screen earlier on. But the word giving all diligence has to do with applying ourselves.

The word is sometimes translated giving with all zeal. Diligence, as I've said before, is a word which is always, or used to be used in the old days in a testimonial concerning work. Now, the young people don't

know what a testimonial is.

Older folk will know what a testimonial is. Well, I hope you know what it is in America. But when you go looking for a job, you get people to write a testimonial.

You get the pastor and you get your high school teacher or whoever you know, or where you did your work here and there, and so they will write a testimony of your work. And they say, well, you know, this is a good worker, and so you present that to your prospective employer. And they look at that.

And one of the words that would often be part of that, and obviously we don't do anything like that anymore, but would be part of that is that he is a diligent worker. He is a diligent worker. In other words, he applies himself and he works hard.

He is faithful in working. Now, the word is mostly in English used in the context of work. When we say someone is diligent, we mean that they work and they are faithful and they are dependable and they work hard.

The word is never used in a sense of a vacationer. You never hear about someone is diligent at vacationing or someone is diligent at sleeping. The word has nothing to do with those kinds of things.

It has to do with work. It has to do with effort. And the ESV says giving all effort, putting sweat into it.

There is no way you can be diligent at something and number one, not put energy into it, and number two, not stick to it. And so, those are the things that need to be done if we're going to be diligent. And so, again, we're not saying we save ourselves.

He has made everything available, but there's the part that we have to do. We're going to come to this very difficult verse in next week or the week after, where Peter speaks about the fact that, and he uses exactly the same word, verse 10, Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure. Now, I'm not going to go there right now.

We'll deal with that. But you can see that people can easily misinterpret that and say, well, Peter is saying that we must save ourselves. No, we don't save ourselves.

And in the same way here, we're not doing the stuff in our human capacity. We're doing things as God makes the strength available. But there's the part that we have to play.

And there's a technical example, which maybe Jim and a couple of others may understand, but most won't. But I'm going to try anyhow. In a motor car or in electronics, you have a thing called a relay, a relay.

And what a relay does is you have a small current that turns the relay on. And the relay is a switch, which then turns on a bigger current. In other words, you just need a little bit of electricity to switch this thing on, and then it will handle the load of something much bigger.

And that's literally our relationship with God. We just need that little bit of energy, of commitment, of decision, and then it switches God on, if you will. I'm saying that respectfully.

And God's power comes into operation. God begins to do all of those things. To give you an example, those who have air conditioning in their homes, you have a thermostat.

And the thermostat, you just press a button, and that button would burn out if it had to handle the load of that compressor and of the fan and all of those things. But you press a little button, and it sets things in motion so that a relay kicks in, and it handles all of that power and all of that load. And that's exactly how our relationship with God works.

We just press the button. We just make the right decision. And God's power comes into operation, and God deals with the rest of it and makes it happen.

And so we need to give all diligence. The word giving here is a word that is... some translators use the word supplement. Add to.

So it is something I need to bring to the table. It's not something that I just participate in, but it's something I need to bring. And so add to your faith.

Now you're going to see he uses this word add. And, of course, Yazeed was talking about the kids learning new math, and I remember I learned some kind of new math. Well, I didn't learn it.

I was just told about it at school. I never understood how it works. My understanding is still that 1 plus 1 equals 2. That's as far as I understand.

And that's called addition, adding. And so if you have 1, you put something with that, you add something to that, and you end up with something more. It's as simple as that.

And so what he is saying, then, is that you need to add to your faith virtue. Now, he's going to give us eight things here, and I'm pretty sure we're not going to get through all eight this evening. The question and the impression, you can easily gain the impression by looking at these verses that there are steps.

And, in fact, I've heard preachers preach it that way. So you begin with faith, and then you add to your faith virtue or goodness, and then you add to that knowledge. So these are like steps.

The problem is that when you try and analyze that, it doesn't actually work that way. You don't begin... Well, you do begin with faith. There are two steps in this whole thing that are in the right place.

The first one is faith. That's where you begin. Add to your faith.

And then the last one is love. Let me just see what I did here. I don't know what I did.

Anyway, so the last one is love. Those two are in the right place. The others are not steps.

The others are ingredients. In other words, the process of these eight steps is you begin with faith, and the end goal is love. That's true.

But in order to get from faith to love, you don't go through these other six steps. You need to have all of them present. So if you're going to draw it, if we had a board, they wouldn't be steps 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. What they would be is they would be a circle.

And all of these things need to be put in. Let's have a look at this knowledge self-control. Add to knowledge self-control.

And here's why they are not steps. Because there is no logical connection. There is no biblical connection.

There's no spiritual connection anywhere in the Scriptures that knowledge leads to self-control. The two things are not directly connected. They are simply ingredients in this pot of things that needs to be present in the Christian's life.

Because you'll see at the end that he says that if these things are not present, then you are short-sighted. You're blind. And so all of these need to be present.

All of them we need to work on at the same time. There are some aspects of our faith that is a step-by-step process. As the Old Testament says, line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little, and there a little.

But there are other things that we have to work on simultaneously. So we can't, if we go back to the beginning then, we can't say, well, I've got faith, now I'm going to work on virtue, and once I achieve virtue, then I'll get to knowledge. No, you need to work on them all at the same time.

And they all support one another in one way or the other. All right, now I've taken a long time about that, but it's important because there are some commentators and there are some preachers who want to create a sort of eight-step program. This is not an eight-step program.

This is a one-step program with eight things that need to be done at the same time. So, he says, to begin with, you add to your faith. That's where it all begins.

And remember, we've drawn the distinction between the faith, in the sense of the things that we believe, and faith in the sense of personal faith in God and in the work of the cross. And here he's not speaking about the faith, the things that we believe. Here he's speaking about your faith.

In other words, my believing in God, believing in His Word. In other words, my salvation. Because that's where it all begins.

On what basis am I saved? Going back to that verse I quoted earlier, that's so easy, John 3.16, that whosoever believeth in Him will not perish but have everlasting life. It all begins in believing. Sorry.

Nothing begins, nothing happens in a Christian's life until he believes. Now, we know that. But the problem is that we now need to move beyond just believing.

And of course, this is exactly where we have the problem, because there are those of that doctrinal persuasion who say, well, I'm justified by faith, and that's all I need to do. As long as you believe, you're saved. And you'll see that clearly this is not entirely true.

If I believe, there must be fruit. And if I believe, there must be growth. There must be development.

And I'm not going to deal with those extra verses which we'll come to next week. So I begin with faith. Now I need to add these other things.

And the first one, and again, they're not in any specific order, is virtue. Virtue. Virtue is just an old word for goodness.

Goodness. If we say that, we tend to use the word in the context of a woman, and we say that she is a virtuous woman. In other words, she is good.

She is a good woman. She is not morally loose. So virtue is goodness.

Now, who is good? Only God is good. But remember, what is the goal? That we may be partakers of His divine nature. Now, again, I can't make myself good.

And yet at the same time, God is telling us that we, you need to add to your faith, goodness. So, and this applies to all of them. I'm not going to repeat myself on each one of these steps on this principle.

But the principle applies to all of them. And so, there is an aspect in which God makes me good. But there's an aspect in which I need to add goodness to my life.

How do I add goodness or virtue to my life? Well, it begins with what I think about. If I'm going to be thinking about the wrong stuff, it's not going to make me good. I think I committed a terrible crime this week, and I watched the presidential debate.

That does not lead to goodness. It causes all sorts of stuff to come up within us. Anger and frustration and bitterness and wrath.

That does not lead to goodness. So, the things I watch, the things I listen to, and the things I think upon, determine to some extent my goodness. Why are bad people bad? Because they fill their thoughts and their minds with bad stuff.

It's as simple as that. Now, I'm not going to make this a purely mechanical process. That if you think on the good things, then you will automatically become... Because clearly there is a process in which God plays a part.

There is the work of the Holy Spirit within us. But there's also the part that we need to play. And you cannot become virtuous.

You cannot become good by filling your mind, whether it's through the television or the internet, with murder and mayhem and rape and violence and racism and all of this kind of stuff. It cannot make you good. I told you, I think recently, I think I did, about the old days in South Africa where we had a censorship board.

Because we believed, or the country believed incorrectly, that you can make people good and moral by making laws against every form of immorality. And so, every television program was censored. You couldn't watch television other than the government channels.

And every movie in the movie house was censored. Huge sections were cut out. Anything that had violence, rape, murder, swearing, whatever, it was all cut out.

To the extent that I understand from some people that you couldn't even follow the storyline anymore because so much of it had been cut out. But there was a censorship board and this board was made up of ministers from the Reformed Church. And they would watch these movies and they would determine what was to be cut out and what wasn't to be cut out.

Now, it's a long story, but here's the bottom line. I cannot imagine what that process has done to the minds of those preachers who had to watch these movies over and over and decide what to cut out. There is no way you can watch that stuff and end up with a pure mind.

And you cannot end up with a pure life if you do not have a pure mind. And so, what we fill our minds with and what we think upon will determine whether we end up good or bad. And so, we need to work hard at this.

Giving all diligence. Add to your faith virtue, goodness. And to virtue, knowledge.

Now, remember I said that Peter deals with this word knowledge seven times and there is a wrong knowledge which he's going to deal with because he's also dealing in the book primarily with false teachers. And so, there's a wrong kind of knowledge. These guys were called Gnostics.

The word knowledge here is Gnosis, from which we get the word Gnostics. They had knowledge, but it wasn't the right kind of knowledge. And so, it's not a matter of adding any kind of knowledge.

This has got nothing to do with knowing about math and science and all of that kind of stuff. This has to do with knowing God and His word. Knowing God and His word.

How do I add knowledge? Oh, I come to the altar and I'll pray and God will zap me and download His knowledge into my mind. No, I get the knowledge by diligently seeking Him through the scriptures, by being taught as we are being taught this evening. Knowledge does not come by osmosis.

Knowledge doesn't come, you can't get the right kind of knowledge by watching the debate. It just doesn't work that way. The only way you get knowledge is through diligence.

Same word again, same principle again. Spending time in the word of God. Reading good books, obviously, that help me understand the word of God.

Listening to good teachers. That is how I grow in knowledge. But at the same time, knowledge cannot just be, and godly knowledge is not just academic knowledge, theoretical knowledge.

It is knowledge which has a practical application. When computers first came out, I was on the leading edge of learning about computers when they first came. And I would buy a book on a program or on something, and I would read the book.

I'd say, yeah, well, now I know. One of the programs way back, not at the beginning, but a program called Lotus 1-2-3. There are some old people who know what Lotus 1-2-3 is.

It's a spreadsheet, like Excel. It was the beginning of spreadsheets. Well, I actually read a book on Lotus 1-2-3, quite a thick book.

And then I said, well, now I know everything about the program. Let me turn the computer on, now I can do stuff. Well, I hear a few chuckles, because obviously I couldn't do anything.

It's only when you... And then I discovered, no, what I have to do, and there's a spiritual application. I'm not teaching computers now. But I discovered, no, what I have to do is I have to try to do something, and then I figure out, no, I can't do it.

Then I look it up in the book. Ah, you do it this way. Then I apply that, and I do the next step.

And that's how the Christian faith is. You can't go to seminary and spend six years, seven years, and get a PhD in theology, and think, well, now I've got it all. No, it's a step-by-step process.

As you learn something, you put it into practice. As you hit the next snag, the next problem, you go back to the Word, and you say, well, Lord, now what do I do here? And He tells me how I do it. Now I'm accumulating knowledge that has some value, that has a practical application.

And I've told you many times about professors in universities who have strings of PhDs, and I've met with many of them, and discussed and talked with many of them. They don't know the first thing about the Christian life. They don't know the first thing about Jesus Christ.

They don't know. Many of them are not even born again. But they have endless degrees, having studied the theory, the theology, but there's no living practical application.

That's not knowledge. Knowledge is knowing and doing, and doing and knowing. And so as I learn to do things, as I learn to live the Christian life, as I learn to deal with life's questions through the Word of God, that is knowledge.

I'm adding and I'm increasing knowledge. And that's as far as we'll get tonight. So for this very reason, because God has made everything available to us that we might become partakers of the divine nature, let's apply ourselves and add to our faith goodness and to goodness knowledge.

Father, we thank You for Your Word. But Lord, we thank You that it is not just a book of theology, but it is a book of practical living. And Lord, that even in this passage there are practical things that we need to do.

And Lord, there are practical things that each one of us need to do as we go from here tonight in changing the way that we do things and the things that we listen to and watch and our approach to Your Word. Lord, we pray that You would help us, that we may be those who are diligent, who are faithful in applying ourselves towards godliness. Lord, that our faith may not be barren as Peter speaks about later on in the passage.

But Lord, that our lives may be abundant with fruit as we work in cooperation with You and as You work in us and we obey and we work in the power of the Spirit. And so, Lord, I pray that this may be real. I pray, Lord, that You would... For those, Lord, who are present and those who are watching on the video, Lord, who've adopted a cruise approach to Christianity, thinking that they're just going to go on this cruise and somehow end up on the other side and everything's going to be good.

I pray, Lord, that there may be a wake-up call tonight. Lord, that we may understand and realize that there is work to be done. There is work to be done in Your kingdom, but there's work to be done in each one of our hearts and each one of our lives.

And Lord, I pray that You'd help us to be diligent at working out our salvation. And Lord, applying our faith that it may have a real effect and change upon our lives. I ask this in Jesus' name.

I pray that You'd go with us, Lord, keep us and protect us and bring us together again safely again on Saturday, I pray. In Jesus' name, amen.

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